

Cuban Invaders Smashed Guatemala Reds For CIA

'Govt Sent Us,' Says Leader

By AL WOOD
Staff Correspondent

DEL RAY, BEACH — At least two months before it took part in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, the anti-Cuban Brigade of Communist agents arrived in Havana with the Central Intelligence Agency being helped by the member

Guatemala. The air base is the site of a million-acre field which was used as the springboard for the air launch in the Bay of Pigs fiasco as well as other anti-Castro flights.

A number of aircraft with Americans aboard were hit by Communist anti-aircraft fire and downed before the abortive April 17, 1961, invasion attempt was made, according to Gen. Rómulo Montesino, who was second in command of the armored division for the anti-Castro offensive during the three days of fighting at the Bay of Pigs. For Poles

Montesino, a security officer under Castro's predecessor, Batista, and a U. S. Army intelligence veteran of the North African campaign, spoke to a press gathering at the country club here.

He said the brigade had been used to quell a Communist uprising in Guatemala in February 1961, with the blessing and encouragement of the CIA.

"The Communists were threatening to take over the country while we were there, so the Govt sent us out to put down the revolt and they (the CIA) told the Communists if they didn't surrender we would wipe them out," Montesino said.

"We had 1,500 men, which is a bigger army than most of the Central American countries have. So, they gave up," he said.

Muntesino claimed that there were at least 300 Americans involved in air operations alone during the Bay of Pigs invasion. These included maintenance men, mechanics, crewmen and 40 pilots, making it appear likely that more than four Americans perished.

The survivor reports that there were 15 B-26 medium bombers made available to the Cuban brigade. He claims that 30 had been promised.

Monesino said that eight months of practice went into the Bay of Pigs invasion and that weapons were air dropped into Cuba for anti-Castro forces to use.

Before the invasion several planes were lost or damaged by Cuban artillery fire and were unable to make the return trip to the Guatemalan base of operation. Most of the pilots were Americans, Montesino said.

Montesino said that he himself flew one of the planes that was hit and lost. His craft was riddled by Communist bullets over the mountains of Cuba and he was forced to land on Jamaica.

He says he had been told not to try to land at the U. S. Naval base at Guantanamo Bay or at Key West or he would have been shot down.

The British at Kingston were prepared to hand him over to Castro forces after the Fiedlista radio claimed his had been a bombing mission in which innocent civilians were killed. Martinezino says he only dropped guns on the flight.

Montesino claims he called CIA headquarters in Guatemala City and ~~was~~ and was told that no one there knew of him. When he threatened to relocate himself, ~~the CIA~~ ~~agreed~~ ~~to~~ ~~send~~ ~~him~~ ~~and~~ ~~his~~ ~~crew~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~British~~ ~~authorities~~

The Cuban anti-Communist feels certain that his brigade could have established a military foothold if adequate U. S. air support had been given.

"They sent in some F-86s (Saberjets) on Wednesday (April 19, 1961) and they flew around Fidel's planes," Montesino says. "Only one of those could have taken care of the whole Fidel air force. If only one American pilot had gone wild, the invasion would have been a success."

Montesclero said that Castro's air strength consisted of T-33 jet trainers and World War II P-51 Mustangs, about 30 planes all together.

On the ground, Castro forces sustained an estimated 10,000 casualties, with one entire division destroyed by incendiary phosphorous bombs dropped by the indefensible B-26s.

The impact of knowing that American aid would be not forthcoming hit the Cuban Brigade hard, Montesino relates.

"I went to company headquarters and asked when the air support and help were coming. I was told 'in 30 minutes.' They told me--I heard, 'in 30 minutes!'"

"Time passed, first an hour, then three, and still no help."